

1-1-2009

# Archives and Preservation Basics

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## Recommended Citation

Weiser, Abbie, "Archives and Preservation Basics" (2009). *Presentations & Slide Shows*. Paper 3.  
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# Archives and Preservation Basics

Abbie Weiser, CA



Front cover, *The American Archivist*, Fall/Winter 2005

# What is an Archive?

- An organization that collects the records of individuals, families, or other organizations; a collecting archives.

-Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology



# What are Archives?

- Materials created or received by a person, family, or organization, public or private, in the conduct of their affairs and preserved because of the enduring value contained in the information they contain or as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator, especially those materials maintained using the principles of provenance, original order, and collective control; permanent records.

-Glossary of Archival and Records  
Terminology



# Types of Value in Records

- Informational
- Evidential
- Artifactual



Leon Metz, UTEP Collection

# Purpose of Archives

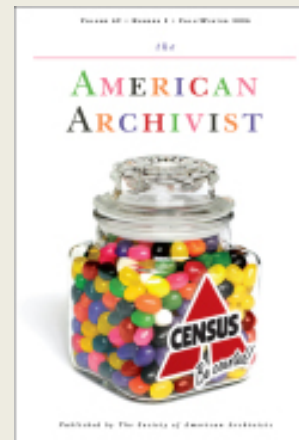
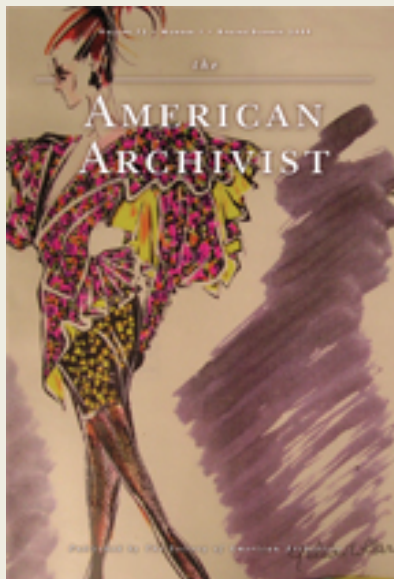
- Historical
- Cultural
- Legal
- Administrative



ASARCO smelter, Sidney Adams papers

# What is an Archivist?

- Basic definition: a person who selects, preserves, arranges, and describes records of enduring value.
- And so much more!



# Archival Functions

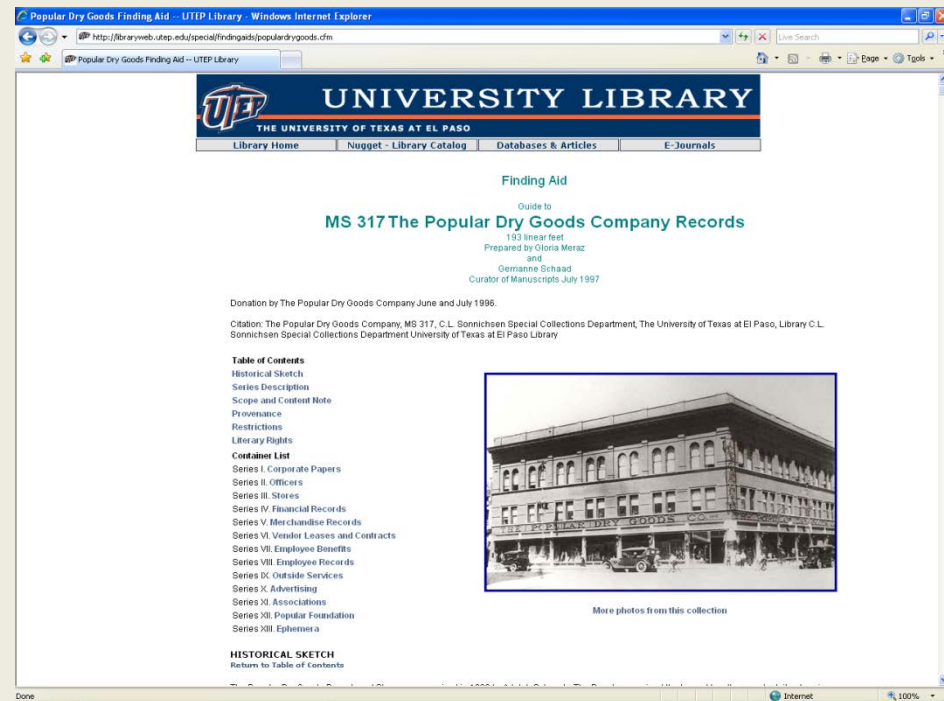
- Selection and appraisal
- Arrangement and description
- Preservation
- Reference and access
- Management
- Fundraising
- Outreach and marketing (vital!)



Dr. Eleanor Duke, UTEP Collection

# Arrangement and Description

- Principle of provenance
- Original order
- Collection and series level organization and description





# Outreach Activities

12B www.elpasoinc.com

COLLEGIATE LOCAL

AUGUST 3-9, 2008

## Preservation Texas board meets in El Paso

Photos by Alexandra Dorral

The board of Preservation Texas held its quarterly meeting in El Paso last weekend. Board members toured historic El Paso buildings and attended a reception at the El Paso Community Foundation's Old City Club Room in the Cortez Building. For more information, visit [www.preservationtexas.org](http://www.preservationtexas.org).



Ed Pickett

Leslie Bergloff

Bud Dehrkoop



Krista Gebbia and Troy Ainsworth



William Helm



Pat Worthington and Abbie Weiser



Susan Lassell and Karl McElhaney



Gary Williams, Ivonne Jimenez and Marc Thompson



Claudia Rivers and Sandy Pickett



Libby Bouck



Catherine B. Kistenmacher, Claudia Rivers, Abbie Weiser and Jody Schwartz.



[illegible]

# Living.

ETimes

Sunday, Aug. 17, 2008

Features/Editor Paula Monarrez Diaz 546-4354, paula@elpasotimes.com | www.elpasotimes.com

**Only on ETimes**

See Jim City Arts reader more about El Paso's culture in our "What's Happening in the Valley" blog

**More**

► **El Paso's** pocket and garden: Play rubiks, and more... video, photo & photo.

Ruben R. Ramirez / El Paso Times

**El Pasoan** Wilhelmina "Willie" Apodaca recognized herself in a photograph, shown at right, that was taken by the Casasola Photo Studio and reprinted in the El Paso Times. She said she immediately recognized the blue dress she wore in the photograph.

- **The Special Collections Department** at the University of Texas at El Paso and the El Paso Times have teamed up to help identify the people in more than 50,000 photographs shot in the Casasola Photo Studio.
- **The department** acquired the negatives in 1996, and the Times came on board in 2002. Every Tuesday, a different photograph is published in the Living Section of the El Paso Times in hopes that readers will recognize the person or people in the photograph.
- **Since the project** began, about 300 people have been identified, mostly by Times readers. The department also has displayed some photographs at city malls, and has an online database at <http://129.108.99.94:200/casasola/default.htm>
- **The department** is seeking donations to help preserve the negatives, which

## About the project

By Maribel Villalva

El Paso Times

El Paso Times

El Paso Times

El Paso Times

El Paso Times

El Paso Times

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El Paso Times

The Casasola logo.

# The search for 50,000 names

## Slowly, Casasola project identifies El Pasoans' photos

By Maribel Villalva

El Paso Times

El Paso Times

El Paso Times

El Paso Times

El Paso Times

El Paso Times

El Paso Times

El Paso Times

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# Even More Outreach and Marketing

Other publicity includes:

- Television news stories.
- Mall exhibits.
- Publication of archival materials in books and articles.





# Exhibits, Events, and Lectures



# Types of Materials

- Books
- Papers
- Textiles
- Photographs
- Negatives (nitrate, acetate, glass, polyester)
- Record albums
- Tapes and DVDs
- Artifacts
- Artworks
- Furniture
- Digital records



Ore samples, Ginther family papers, MS 437



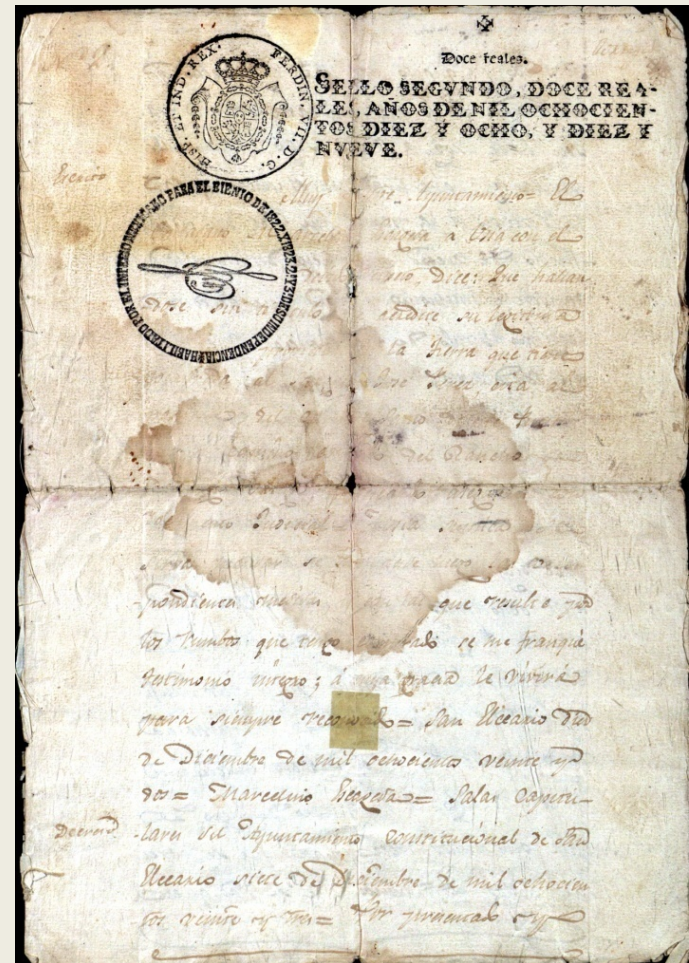
Dress from Wilhemina  
Apodoca, Casasola Studio  
Photo Collection



# Preservation vs. Conservation



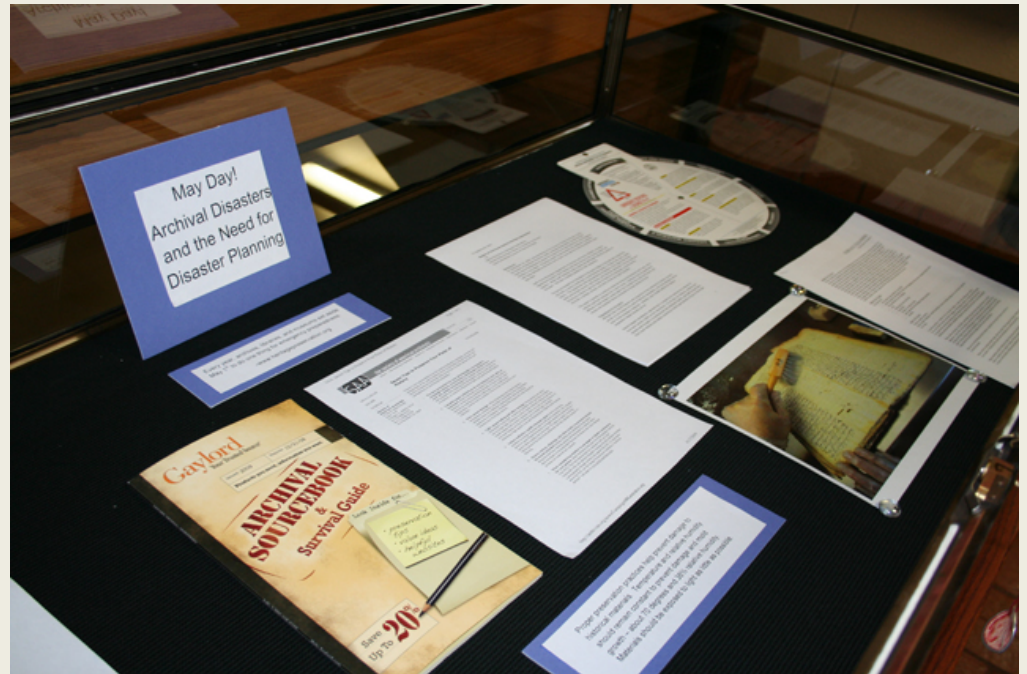
Temple Mt. Sinai Council of Jewish Women, Stout-Feldman Studio photographs, PH 074



Early nineteenth-century deed, Escajeda family papers, MS 556

# Need for Preservation Strategies

- Specific threats: heat, humidity, light, mold, pests, theft, fire, water, and handling of the materials.
- LOCKSS
- Disaster planning



# Preservation Basics

- Location
- Security
- Storage





# Preservation Basics

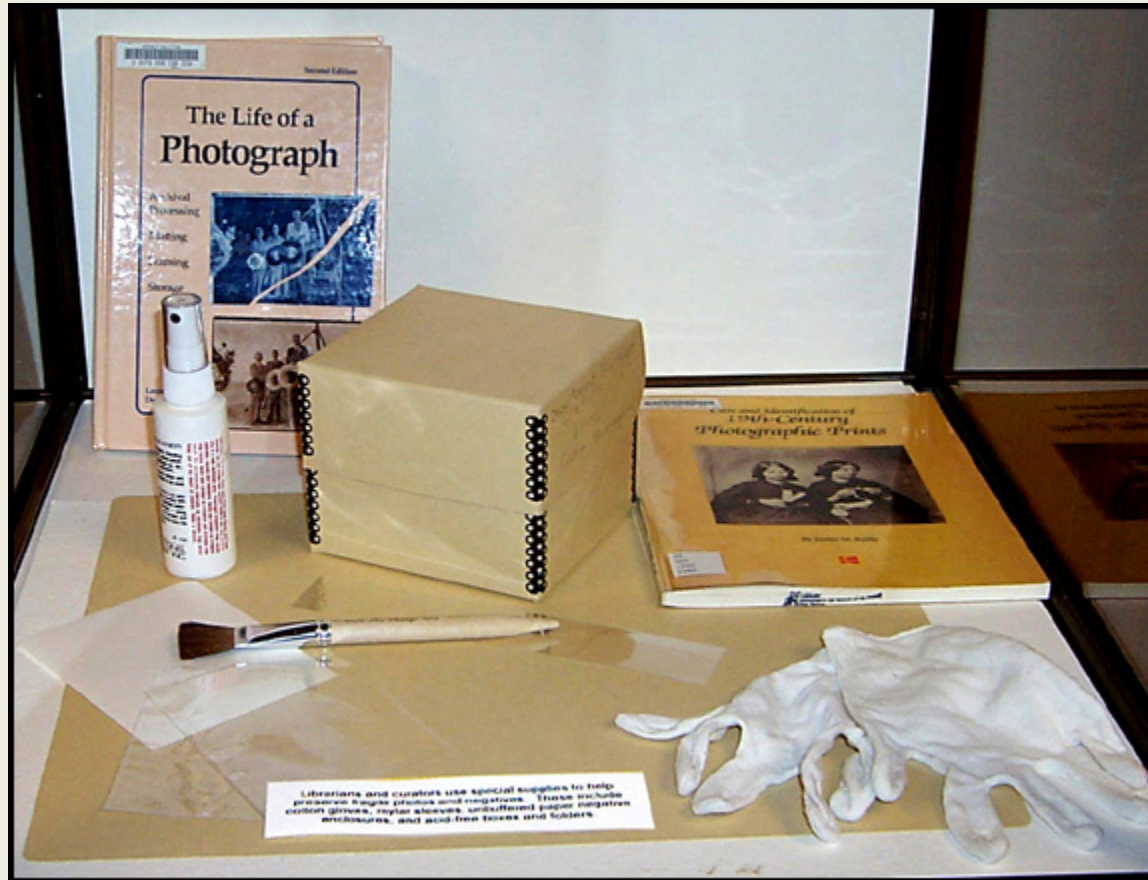
- Archival records should be stored at a *constant* temperature, usually about 68-72 degrees, in acid-free folders and boxes.
- RH should be about 38%.
- Temperature and RH should be monitored.
- Archives should control exposure to light.
- Fire and water.
- Handling of materials.

# Preservation Basics

## During Processing

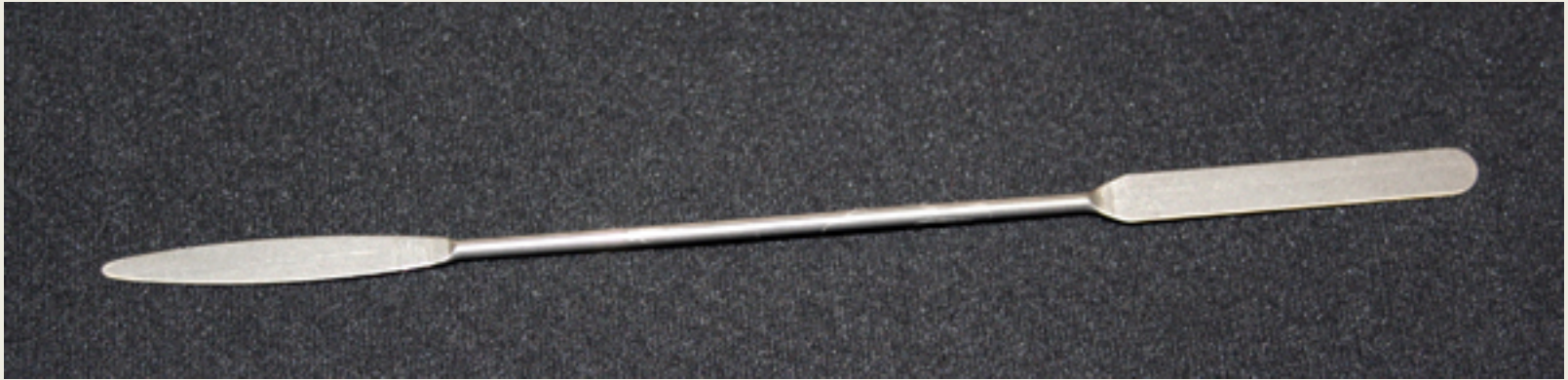
- Preservation work primarily done while processing (look for signs of deterioration).
- Housing of materials.
- Separate acidic materials.
- Cleaning/removing staples, paper clips, etc.
- Make preservation copies, if necessary.
- Know your materials (paper, inks, photo processes, etc.).

# Preservation Supplies





# The Micro Spatula & Acid-Free Tissue Paper



# Humidifying and Flattening Materials



# Preservation Problems

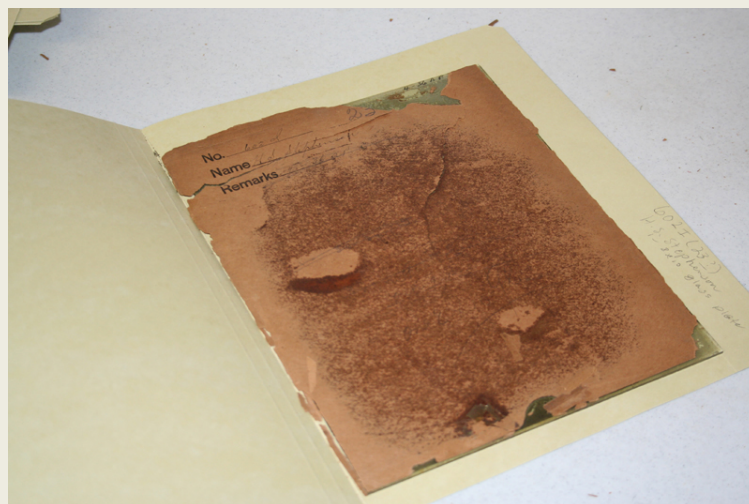
- Deteriorated condition of materials when we receive them.
- Funding
- Space
- Lack of institutional support.



# Examples of Preservation Problems

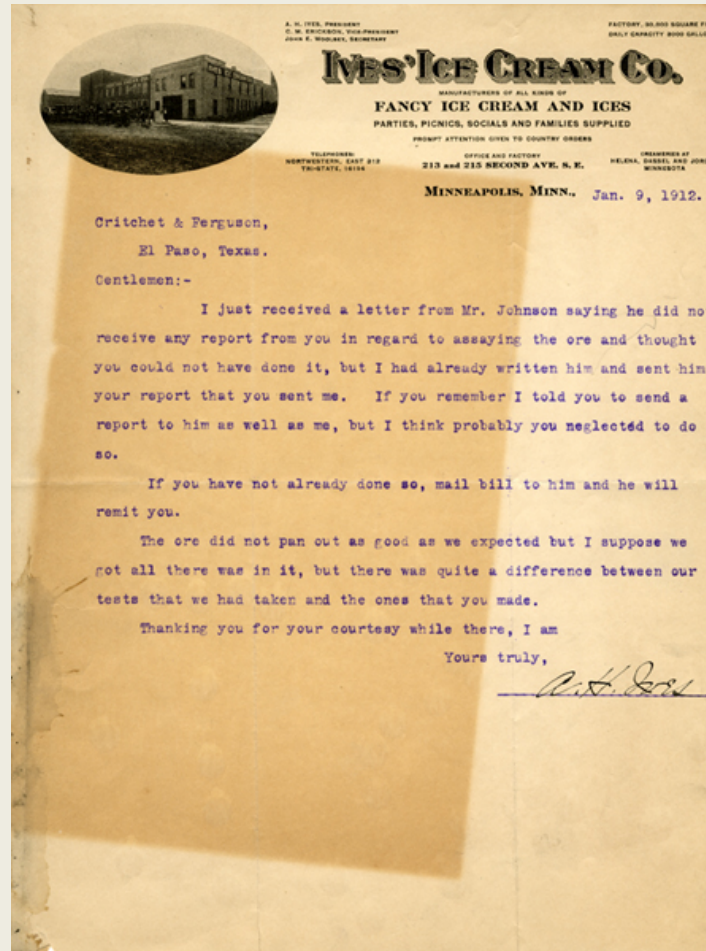


# Examples of Preservation Problems





# Example of Brittle Paper & Acid Damage



Correspondence, Critchett and Ferguson Assayers records

# Mold – PART I



- According to the TSL, mold is the biggest threat to archival collections in West Texas (due to faulty HVAC systems).
- People's health comes before preservation!
- Try to determine if the mold is active or inactive (it is hard to tell).
- Segregate moldy materials from non-moldy items.
- Consult a conservator.

# Mold – Part II

- If mold is inactive, there are ways to remove it.
- On a non-windy day, place and secure dry moldy documents in the sunlight to kill mold spores.
- Wear a mask and rubber gloves while handling moldy documents and work outside.
- Lightly brush or use a HEPA vacuum in an open area away from other documents.
- Shelves can be disinfected with bleach.
- Be sure to disinfect clothes, vacuum, and brushes too.



# Mold Damage in New Orleans, 2005



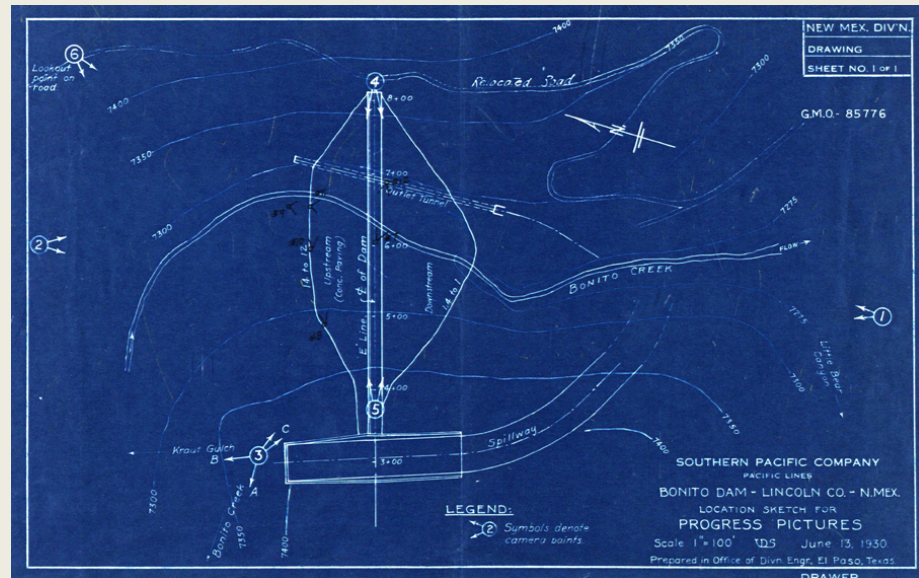
# If Materials Get Wet...

- Documents, books, photographs, and works of art on paper may be extremely fragile when wet.
- Increase air flow with fans, open windows, air conditioners, and dehumidifiers. Moderate light exposure (open shades, leave basement lights on) can also reduce mold and mildew.
- Free the edges of prints and paper objects in mats and frames, if possible. These should be allowed to air dry.
- Wet books and papers should also be air dried or kept in a refrigerator or freezer until they can be treated by a professional conservator.

- [www.heritagepreservation.org](http://www.heritagepreservation.org)

# Caring for Your Own Records

- Books
- Photographs
- Scrapbooks
- Negatives and films
- Digital records
- Paper
- Clippings
- Oversize items
- Textiles

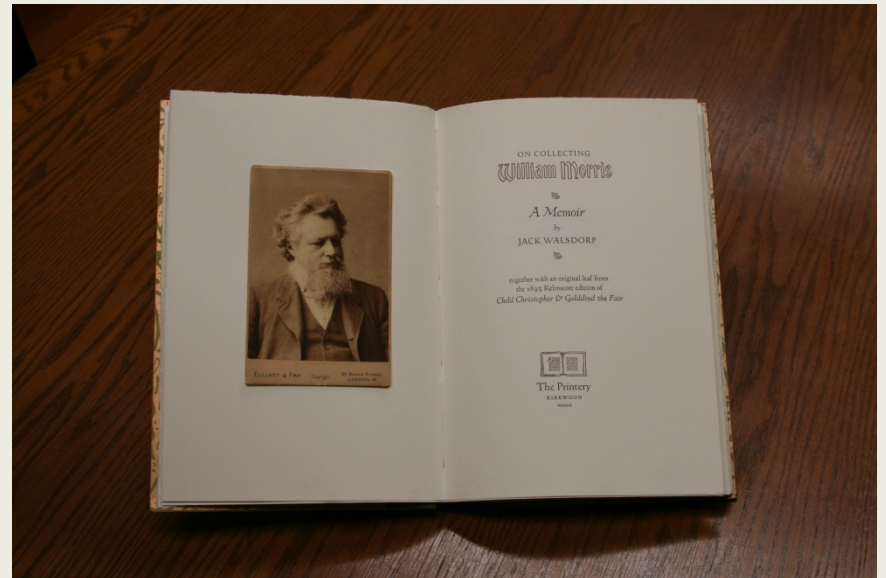


Map of Bonito Dam, Southern Pacific Railroad records



# Books

- Store upright or flat; do not store with spine up.
- Powder-coated steel shelves are best.
- Keep in good environmental conditions.
- Treat gently.
- Smoke smells.
- Avoid wrapping in newspaper or plastic.
- Care of fragile books.
- Repairs and rebinding.



# Photographs



Betty Mary Goetting, Betty Mary Smith  
Goetting papers

- Wear cotton gloves.
- Framed photographs vs. loose photographs.
- Photograph albums.
- Rolled photographs can be humidified and flattened, but use caution.
- Avoid magnetic albums (usually from the 1970s – 1990s).
- Identifying photos.

# Scrapbooks



Scrapbook, Pan American Round Table of El Paso records, MS 526

- Scrapbooks are usually made with very bad, acidic paper.
- Try to preserve the artifactual nature of the scrapbook.
- Only remove items if they are in immediate danger.
- Take photographs of the complete scrapbook.
- Interleaving with acid-free paper technique.
- Store in acid-free boxes and use acid-free tissue to “pad” boxes.

# Negatives & Films

- Cold storage is better (below 50 degrees).
- Considered the original – always keep.
- Good to separate from prints.
- Pre-1950 negatives should be stored in acid-free paper enclosures.
- Later negatives can be stored in mylar sleeves.
- Glass-plate negatives need to be stored upright in special padded boxes and marked “fragile” on the box.
- A sign of deterioration includes the smell of vinegar or dirty socks.
- Reformatting a good idea for home movies on film and video.

# Digital Records

The screenshot shows a Netscape browser window titled "Casasola - Search - Netscape". The address bar contains the URL "http://129.108.99.94:200/casasola/FMPro?-db=Casasola&". The browser's menu bar includes File, Edit, View, Go, Bookmarks, Tools, Window, and Help. The toolbar features navigation buttons (back, forward, home, stop), a search button, and links to Mail, AIM, Home, Radio, My Netscape, Search, Bookmarks, Instant Message, WebMail, and Radio. The main content area has a large "Search" heading with a magnifying glass icon. Below this is a logo for "Casasola HOME OF FINE PORTRAITS" with the address "511 S. El Paso St. El Paso, Texas". The search form includes a "Category:" dropdown menu set to "- No Selection -", an "Identifier:" text input field, and a "Description:" text input field. To the right of the form is a link: "For Searching Tips >Click Here<". At the bottom of the form are three buttons: "Start Search", "Find All Records", and "Reset this form". The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the "start" button, open folders for "teaching", and active windows for "Casasola - Search..." and "Casasola present...". The system clock shows "2:22 PM".

Casasola - Search - Netscape

File Edit View Go Bookmarks Tools Window Help

http://129.108.99.94:200/casasola/FMPro?-db=Casasola& Search

Mail AIM Home Radio My Netscape Search Bookmarks Instant Message WebMail Radio

Search

**Casasola**  
HOME OF FINE PORTRAITS  
511 S. El Paso St. El Paso, Texas

Category: - No Selection -

For Searching Tips >Click Here<

Identifier:

Description:

Start Search Find All Records Reset this form

start teaching Casasola - Search... Casasola present... 2:22 PM

Database for digitized negatives from the Casasola Studio Photographs collection

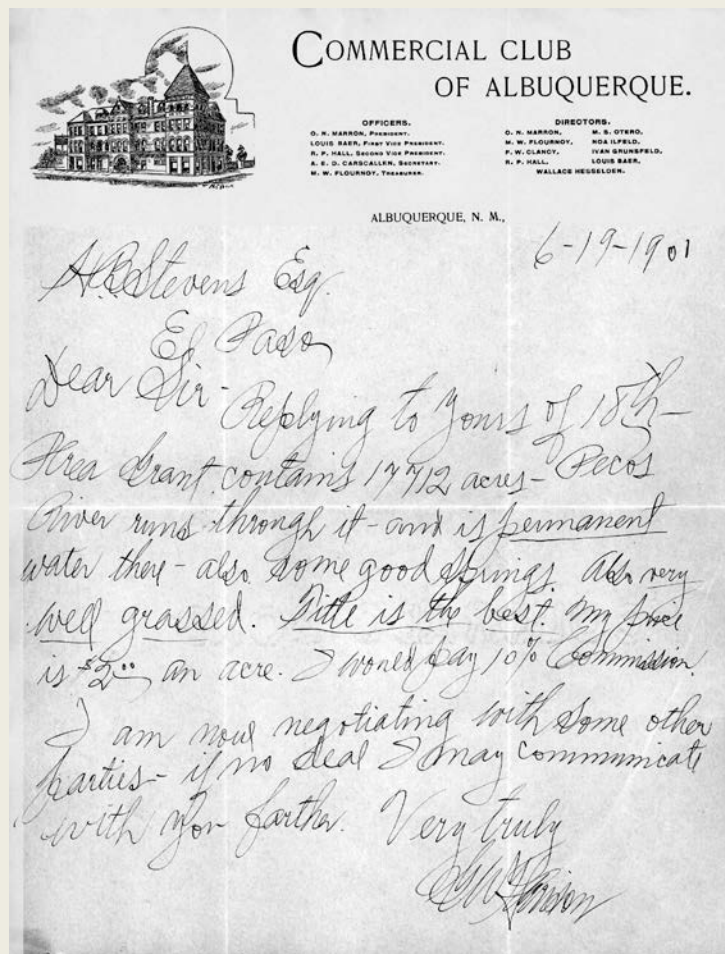


# Preservation and Digital Records

- Digital Commons?
- Early intervention is necessary...more so than with paper records.
- Even when records are digitized, we *must* keep the originals!
- Digitization is great for access; not so great for preservation.
- Digital photographs.
- Commitment to reformatting.
- There are no such things as permanent electronic records.

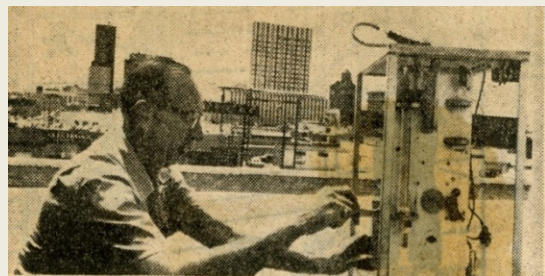
# Paper

- Remove rubber bands, staples, paper clips; very gently brush dirt/dust off with a soft brush, if needed.
- Unfold paper materials (humidify, if needed).
- Make preservation copies, if needed.
- Separate acidic materials.
- Problems with deacidification.
- Store in acid-free folders and boxes in good preservation conditions.



Correspondence, H.B. Stevens papers

# Clippings & Telegrams



CHEMICAL SENSING devices like this one being checked by a company scientist, American Smelting and Refining Co. (ASARCO) help provide cleaner air for residents of El Paso, site of one of the firm's large metals smelters.

## ASARCO Installs New Air Pollution Detector

AUG 18 1971

An IBM computing system, linked to sensors strategically placed throughout the city, is helping improve air quality for residents.

The computer, installed at a nearby American Smelting and Refining Co. (ASARCO) smelter, determines how much sulphur dioxide — a by-product gas created during copper and lead smelting — is reaching ground level.

WHEN THE computer projects sulphur dioxide concentrations approaching air quality control limits ASARCO must meet, smelter operations are curtailed or stopped.

Each of the 18 sensors placed around El Paso — some of them in residents' backyards and garages — works as a super-sensitive "sniffer" able to detect concentrations of sulphur dioxide as small as one part in 20 million.

Readings from the sensing units are transmitted electronically to the IBM 1800 data acquisition and analysis system. The computer converts the readings into minute-by-minute sulphur dioxide reports for ASARCO meteorologists.

ASARCO IS developing a mathematical model of El Paso's atmosphere. The computer will use the model to continuously simulate the city's weather and alert ASARCO officials to weather trends that would cause a build-up of sulphur dioxide at ground level.

To complete the model, ASARCO is programming into the computer several years of El Paso's weather history. Detailed data about current weather becomes part of the model each day.

- Very acidic.
- Good to make preservation copies on acid-free paper.
- Separate from the rest of archival materials.

# Oversize items and 3-D Objects



Poster, Farah Strike Collection



Ada Tharp  
Photo Album

- Store flat in acid-free oversize boxes.
- Measure materials before ordering boxes.
- Maps, posters, and other paper oversize items should be stored flat.



# Textiles

- Usually lay flat in acid-free box.
- Roll acid-free tissue and place around and inside garment to cushion and support.
- Do not use buffered acid-free tissue.
- Some garments can be hung vertically, others should not (1920s beaded dresses, garments with heavy ornaments, weak or damaged shoulder areas, knits, and garments in fragile condition).
- Temperature should be about 65 degrees and RH 50%.
- Use a special filtered vacuum to clean textiles.

# Caring for Your Own Records

- Follow preservation basics.
- Make preservation copies.
- Buy storage materials from a reputable archival supplier, such as Gaylord or Metal Edge.
- Use common sense.
- Ask an archivist or conservator if you have additional questions.

# Additional Resources

- [www.archivists.org](http://www.archivists.org)
- <http://southwestarchivists.org/>
- <http://www.metaledgeinc.com/>
- <http://gaylordmart.com/archivalsolutions.asp>
- <http://libraryweb.utep.edu/>
- <http://www.heritagepreservation.org/>
- <http://www.ims.gov/collections/>
- <http://www.nps.gov/history/>